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Communists In Latin America

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President Eisenhower, in tacitly labelling the Castro regime in Cuba Communist through the invocation of the "Kersten amendment" in the Mutual Security Act, has formally set forth a viewpoint that has been prevalent in diplomatic and intelligence circles for some time. Official pronouncements from the State Department have earlier described the Castro government as Communist-influenced. The legal position of the United States at present is that the regime is Communist-controlled.

It is interesting to reflect, in view of this development, on the discussion of communism in Latin America by a man who is certainly in a position to know the subject well. He is Lyman B. Kirkpatrick, inspector general of the Central Intelligence Agency, and his discussion was before the Commonwealth Club of California in San Francisco.

Mr. Kirkpatrick was, according to reports of his address, explicit in his delineation of Communist infiltration in Latin America, making several points that deserve to be brought to the attention of the public seeking an understanding of current developments in that area. Since the end of World War II, he declared, the Communists have greatly intensified their activities in the countries to the south of us, and have employed their diplomatic installations and trade delegations to bring about a larger area of influence.

He described another infiltration project as the thousands of "cultural missions" that have provided Communist countries with an opportunity to receive delegations from Latin American countries and work out arrangements of mutual benefit.

The CIA official pointed out that contributing to the difficulty is the rapid social and economic change that has come to nearly all Latin American countries in recent years, with these countries embarking on large and sometimes over-ambitious plans for industrial development and income diversification. The campaign for industrialization, he said, has brought

a series of economic crises and the people assailed by problems, confusion, and hardship, have encountered the Communists who profess to have the answers and are working diligently to turn the tide in their favor. The CIA leader declared that "to take advantage of the situation, the economic and diplomatic strength is being employed consciously and aggressively to supplement the activities of the national Communist parties, the international fronts and the Communist intelligence services, with the objective to create and maintain an environment in which home-grown revolutions can thrive and be protected."

Citing the tremendous use of the youth movements by the Communist-influenced elements, Mr. Kirkpatrick described this as one of the most powerful and dangerous activities in the area, and it is linked closely with the efforts of the Communists to infiltrate and control the labor and trade unions, which are growing rapidly in the rising industrialization of the countries. Peasants are also the target of the party workers who are aided by the centuries-old conditions of poverty and neglect.

The Communists are active and they are making progress, but Mr. Kirkpatrick prudently warned against any rash or ill-considered act on the part of people in the United States. "We should exercise self-restraint and care in judging individuals, movements and governments," he declared. "An emotional preoccupation with, or an over-estimation of the capabilities of the Communists can only hamper our efforts. The United States has tens of millions of friends in Latin America and they look to us as friends and allies in this struggle."

This is sensible advice, and refusal to follow it has injured us many times in our efforts to curb Communist activity and promote the general welfare of people in other countries. It is hoped that the new administration will have a constructive program to offer in the Latin American crisis, one that will halt the Communists and work toward the improvement of conditions.